

# Vision

**Definition:** Vision impairment is the consequence of a functional loss of vision related to an eye disorder. The terms partially sighted, low vision, and legally blind are used to describe individuals with vision impairments.

**Incidence:** The rate at which visual impairments occur in individuals under the age of 18 is 12.2 per 1,000. Severe visual impairments occur in .06 per 1,000 children.

## •Activities

### 1.) Elementary School Age

- a.) Beep Ball
- b.) What's In The Bag?
- c.) I'm The Same

### 2.) Middle School Age

- a.) Trust Walk
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- b.) What Would You Do?

## •Disability Fact Sheet

## •Disability Myths

## •Braille Alphabet

## •Bibliography of Children's Literature & Audio Visual Materials

## •Community Resources Numbers

### **\*\*Guest Speaker Presentation Idea:**

The National Federation of the Blind  
Barbara Cheadle  
410-659-9314

### **\*\*Activity Idea:**

Order Braille Cards ahead of time for your students. (See resources numbers for address)

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### *Beep Ball*

**Purpose:** To play an active gross motor game without using sight. Sometimes children think of people with disabilities as being unable to participate in any sort of normal activity. This lesson gives children an opportunity to see how children with visual impairments can take part in active games if they have the proper equipment and learn to use it well.

**Materials:** Sound activated softball, bat, cone, two bases, blindfolds, score cards, pencils, clipboard, whistle  
(contact Karen Volz at the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Therapeutic Recreation Services, at 410-887-5370, to borrow the sound activated softball)

**Activity:** Play a softball game in which partner teams compete against each other.

1. In a gym or an outside playing area, divide the class into teams of two each. The playing field consists of a flat home plate, a cone first base and a pitcher's base. Pitchers and score keepers rotate. For instance, a class may have 10 teams. Team one pitches. Team two maintains the scorecard. Team three is up. Teams four to nine are in the field. Outfielders must be 30 feet from the cone until the ball is batted. Team ten provides the catchers.
2. In the second round, team three does the scoring, team two pitches, team four is up, and team one moves to the outfield. A round consists of five pitches per player.
3. Team three is up. The batter wears a blindfold and listens as the softball (containing an activated sound element) is pitched underhand toward the plate. The batter bats the ball. If the ball is not a foul, the batter's partner yells "Fair." The batter holds the partner's right arm with his/her left hand. They run to the cone. The partner yells "Cone." The batter touches the cone with his/her right hand and they both run back to home plate.
4. The person who first catches the batted ball must run after the batter and touch him/her with the ball to put the batter out.
5. If the batter misses the ball or is put out, he/she has four more chances. The batter could also make five runs in that 1/2 round.
6. Partners who are up switch positions as do pitching and catching partners.
7. After five more pitches, the round is over and all teams rotate.

How does it feel to try to coordinate your ability to bat with your ability to hear?

Is it easy or difficult to rely on a seeing partner?

Could more physical education activities be modified or changed to accommodate children with disabilities?

What are your suggestions for teaching students with disabilities in physical education?

**Reference:** People Like Us, Disability Awareness Curriculum For Montana's Students, Edited by: Katharine A. Kelker. Parents, Let's Unite For Kids, Billings, Montana



## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### *What's In The Bag?*

*Purpose:* To help students develop a positive awareness of how people with visual impairments use their sense of touch.

*Materials:* Paper bag and miscellaneous objects

#### *Activity:*

People with visual impairment develop their tactile sense as a way to learn about the world. Put 10-15 objects in a paper bag and either blindfold students or have them close their eyes. Without any verbal clues, have them reach in and identify an object by feel. Place a number of coins and bills in a bag. Ask students to try to identify the amounts. Discuss how blind people would learn to make change.

Barnes, Ellen, Carol Berrigan, and Douglas Biklen. What's the Difference: Teaching Positive Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities. Syracuse, NY: Human Policy Press, 1978.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### *I'm The Same*

*Purpose:* Students will identify how much more they are like a person with a vision impairment than different.

*Materials:* Pen & Paper

#### *Activity:*

As a warm up activity, have students generate a list of all the people they know who have vision impairments. Have the children write an essay that begins "I am the same as someone who can't see..."

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### *Trust Walk*

*Materials:* Blindfolds, cupcakes, juice, pitchers, cups, napkins, plastic silverware

*Purpose:* To help students gain a positive understanding of what it might be like to have a vision impairment.

*Activity:* Divide the group of students into pairs. One person, with the blindfold on, is blind. The other person is the sighted guide. Explain the function of the sighted guide: the blind person takes the arm of the sighted guide at the elbow so that the guide is always walking slightly ahead. The sighted guide never leaves the blind person; he explains where they are, what they're coming to; he puts the blind person's hand on a chair, so the blind person can seat himself; he puts the person's hands on silverware, cups, pitchers, etc. The sighted guide should *help* with words; he does not *do* everything for his partner. The blind person wants to take care of himself as much as possible. Give each sighted guide an index card with the following directions:

1. Go into the bathroom.
2. Wash hands.
3. Come back to the classroom.
4. Sit at a desk.
5. Open a cupcake.
6. Pour a cup of juice.
7. Eat the cupcake with a fork. Drink the juice.
8. Throw away garbage.

Half the cards can begin at #1 and half can begin at #4 so that not everyone is doing the same thing at the same time. As pairs finish the experiment, have them switch roles.

(Note: Pour juice by putting the cup firmly on the table. Hold cup and put index finger into the cup. Pour juice slowly until you feel it on your finger.)

*Discussion:* What was it like to be the blind person? Did you want your partner to do everything for you? What did you notice while you were blindfolded? How did it feel to take the blindfold off? How did you know what you were doing? What was it like to be a helper? How did you feel? What was hard about it?

Barnes, Ellen, Carol Berrigan, and Douglas Biklen. What's the Difference: Teaching Positive Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities. Syracuse, NY: Human Policy Press, 1978.



## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### *Limited Vision*

*Purpose:* Students will gain understanding of what it is like to have a vision impairment.

*Materials:* Saran wrap or baggies, masks, scissors, tape, books, puzzles

#### *Activity:*

Visually impaired people may have different degrees of sight. Create a simulation of visual impairment by taping different numbers of layers of saran wrap or baggies to the eye holes of small Halloween masks. Have the children try to do a variety of tasks while wearing the masks, e.g., read books with different size print, put together puzzles, walk to the bathroom, play a board game, etc. Talk with them about how it feels. What makes it easier--like large print, auditory cues, being familiar with the space and the task, etc.

Barnes, Ellen, Carol Berrigan, and Douglas Biklen. What's the Difference: Teachings Positive Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities. Syracuse, NY: Human Policy Press, 1978.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### *Braille Is A Code*

*Purpose:* To introduce the use of braille for individuals with visual impairments that allows them to read by touch.

*Materials:* Braille Alphabet, clay, heavy paper

#### *Activity:*

People who can't see use a code called braille, named after Louis Braille, the person who invented it. Each letter is represented by raised bumps in different formations on paper. Write for (or have each student write for) copies of the alphabet and numbers in braille\*. Another possibility is to borrow brailers from local agencies\* where visually impaired people are served. Students can practice punching out messages to each other using the brailer. Students can also write out messages by rolling tiny pieces of clay into balls and forming raised letters by pressing the balls on paper or wood. During this time, students might read a book by Louis Braille entitled: *Louis Braille, The Boy Who Invented Books for the Blind*, Margaret Davidson, Scholastic, New York, 1971.

\*See the Community Resources Numbers at the back of this section.

Barnes, Ellen, Carol Berrigan, and Douglas Biklen. What's the Difference: Teaching Positive Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities. Syracuse, NY: Human Policy Press, 1978.

## HIGH SCHOOL

### ***Raised Map Making***

*Purpose:* To increase awareness of adaptations that make it possible for individuals with vision impairments to be more independent.

*Materials:* large cardboard, clay or playdough

#### *Activity:*

People who are visually impaired need materials which can give them information tactily. They use raised maps to learn how to get around. Have the students make a raised map of the school that would help a person who is blind find their way around. Talk with the children about what the map needs to show, like barriers (stairs, furniture in the halls, etc.). They can draw the map first and then use strips of clay to make the lines raised. After it is dry, children can try the map by blindfolding themselves; having someone name a location on the map and the blindfolded student try to walk to that location. Give the map to a person with vision impairments in the school who could use it.



## HIGH SCHOOL

### ***What Would You Do?***

*Purpose:* To help students develop understanding and empathy for individuals with vision impairments.

*Materials:* Cane, dark glasses

*Activity :* Have students brainstorm various ways, both positive and negative, to the following situation: You are walking home and see a young man with a cane and dark glasses waiting at a busy intersection. What would you do? Why is he wearing glasses? Why does he have a cane? How does he feel? Do you think he wants help, why or why not? Students can work independently or in cooperative groups to develop responses to these questions and record their answers. Have students share and discuss their answers as a total group.





## VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

### ◆ Definition ◆

The terms partially sighted, low vision, legally blind, and totally blind are used in the educational context to describe students with visual impairments. These terms are defined as follows:

- "Partially sighted" indicates some type of visual problem has resulted in a need for special education;
- "Low vision" generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although they may require adaptations in lighting, the size of print, and, sometimes, braille;
- "Legally blind" indicates that a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye or a very limited field of vision (20 degrees at its widest point); and
- Totally blind students, who learn via braille or other non-visual media.

Visual impairment is the consequence of a functional loss of vision, rather than the eye disorder itself. Eye disorders which can lead to visual impairments can include retinal degeneration, albinism, cataracts, glaucoma, muscular problems that result in visual disturbances, corneal disorders, diabetic retinopathy, congenital disorders, and infection.

### ◆ Incidence ◆

The rate at which visual impairments occur in individuals under the age of 18 is 12.2 per 1,000. Severe visual impairments (legally or totally blind) occur at a rate of .06 per 1,000.

### ◆ Characteristics ◆

The effect of visual problems on a child's development depends on the severity, type of loss, age at which the condition appears, and overall functioning level of the child. Many children who have multiple disabilities may also have visual impairments resulting in motor, cognitive, and/or social developmental delays.

A young child with visual impairments has little reason to explore interesting objects in the environment and, thus, may miss opportunities to have experiences and to learn. This lack of exploration may continue until learning becomes motivating or until intervention begins.

Because the child cannot see parents or peers, he or she may be unable to imitate social behavior or understand nonverbal cues. Visual disabilities can create obstacles to a growing child's independence.

### ◆ Educational Implications ◆

Children with visual impairments should be assessed early to benefit from early intervention programs, when applicable. Technology in the form of computers and low-vision optical and video aids enable many partially sighted, low vision, and blind children to participate in regular class activities. Large print materials, books on tape, and braille books are available.

Students with visual impairments may need additional help with special equipment and modifications in the regular curriculum to emphasize listening skills, communication, orientation and mobility, vocation/career options, and daily living skills. Students with low vision or those who are legally blind may need help in using their residual vision more efficiently and in working with special aids and materials. Students who have visual impairments combined with other types of disabilities have a greater need for an interdisciplinary approach and may require greater emphasis on self care and daily living skills.

### ◆ Resources ◆

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# VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

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Holbrook, M.C. (Ed.). (1996). *Children with visual impairments: A parents' guide*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine. [Telephone: 1-800-843-7323; (301) 897-3570.]

Scott, E., Jan, J., & Freeman, R. (1995). *Can't your child see?* (2nd ed.). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed. [Available from Pro-Ed, at (512) 451-3246.]

## ◆ Organizations ◆

American Council of the Blind Parents  
c/o American Council of the Blind  
1155 15th St. N.W., Suite 720  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
(202) 467-5081; (800) 424-8666  
URL: <http://www.acb.org>

American Foundation for the Blind  
11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300  
New York, NY 10001  
(800) AFBLIND (Toll Free Hotline)  
For publications, call: (800) 232-3044  
E-Mail: [afbinfo@afb.org](mailto:afbinfo@afb.org)  
URL: <http://www.afb.org/afb>

Blind Children's Center  
4120 Marathon Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90029-0159  
(323) 664-2153; (800) 222-3566  
E-Mail: [blindchildrenscenter.org](mailto:blindchildrenscenter.org)  
URL: <http://www.blindchildrenscenter.org>

Division for the Visually Handicapped  
c/o Council for Exceptional Children  
1920 Association Drive  
Reston, VA 22091-1589  
(703) 620-3660

National Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired, Inc.  
P.O. Box 317  
Watertown, MA 02472-0317  
(617) 972-7441; (800) 562-6265  
E-mail: [napvi@perkins.pvt.k12.ma.us](mailto:napvi@perkins.pvt.k12.ma.us)  
URL: <http://www.spedex.com/napvi>

National Association for Visually Handicapped  
22 West 21st Street, 6th Floor  
New York, NY 10010  
(212) 889-3141  
E-Mail: [staff@navh.org](mailto:staff@navh.org)  
URL: <http://www.navh.org>

National Braille Association, Inc. (NBA)  
3 Townline Circle  
Rochester, NY 14623  
(716) 427-8260  
E-mail: [nbaoffice@compuserve.com](mailto:nbaoffice@compuserve.com)  
URL: <http://members.aol.com/nbaoffice/index.htm>

National Braille Press  
88 St. Stephen Street  
Boston, MA 02115  
(617) 266-6160; (1-800) 548-7323  
E-mail: [orders@ndp.org](mailto:orders@ndp.org)  
URL: <http://www.nbp.org>

National Eye Institute  
National Institutes of Health  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
Building 31, Center Drive, MSC2510  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2510  
(301) 496-5248  
URL: <http://www.nei.nih.gov>

National Federation of the Blind, Parents Division  
c/o National Federation of the Blind  
1800 Johnson Street  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
(410) 659-9314  
E-Mail: [nfb@access.digex.net](mailto:nfb@access.digex.net)  
URL: <http://www.nfb.org>

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped  
Library of Congress  
1291 Taylor Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20542  
(202) 707-5100; (800) 424-8567; (202) 707-0744 (TTY)  
E-Mail: [nls@loc.gov](mailto:nls@loc.gov)  
URL: <http://www.loc.gov/nls>

Prevent Blindness America  
500 E. Remington Road  
Schaumburg, IL 60173  
(847) 843-2020; (800) 221-3004 (Toll Free)  
E-Mail: [info@preventblindness.org](mailto:info@preventblindness.org)  
URL: <http://www.prevent-blindness.org>

The Foundation Fighting Blindness (formerly the National Retinitis Pigmentosa Foundation)  
Executive Plaza One, Suite 800  
11350 McCormick Road  
Hunt Valley, MD 21031-1014  
(888) 394-3937; (800) 683-5551 (TTY)  
(410) 785-1414; (410) 785-9687 (TTY)  
URL: <http://www.blindness.org>

FS13, March 1999

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## **"Disability Myths"**

People with disabilities have been the subject of many myths and misconceptions which interfere with their acceptance into the mainstream of society. To help deflate some of the major myths about disabilities, this information which appears in the "Disabilities Resource Guide" of the KIDS Project, Center for Independent Living, Berkeley, California, is presented.

### Prevalent Myths about People with Visual Impairments

MYTH: Glasses will always help vision.

FACT: Some children are aided by glasses, but there are many for whom vision correction is not possible or for whom glasses are only a partial aid.

MYTH: Holding a book close to eyes or sitting close to a screen or TV is harmful to the eyes.

FACT: There is no harm to the eyes in these cases, and closeness will compensate for print or picture size.

MYTH: Save the child's remaining vision; don't let him/her use it up.

FACT: The child should be encouraged to use whatever vision s/he has and to explore new ways of using it.

MYTH: It's bad for the child's eyes to be in dim light.

FACT: Some eye conditions such as cataracts and albinism require lower lighting to avoid glare.

MYTH: I should avoid words like "look" and "see."

FACT: These words are as much a part of this child's vocabulary as of the world at large. People with visual disabilities simply adapt the meanings to their own use.

MYTH: I should talk loudly so the child will understand me.

FACT: Don't shout. The child's disability is with the eyes and not the ears. Clear, normal-toned speech as used with any child is appropriate.

MYTH: Blind children have better hearing and sense of touch.

FACT: Children with visual disabilities have the same sensory capabilities as all of us; they merely learn to make better use of these senses.

MYTH: A prosthesis ("glass eye") should be kept sterile and inserted or removed by a medical person.

FACT: A prosthesis can be cleaned with soap and water and usually the child is able to insert or remove it if needed.



# The Braille Alphabet

⠠	⠡	⠢	⠣	⠤	⠥	⠦	⠧	⠨	⠩	⠪	⠫	⠬
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
⠭	⠮	⠯	⠰	⠱	⠲	⠳	⠴	⠵	⠶	⠷	⠸	⠹
n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
⠠	⠡	⠢	⠣	⠤	⠥	⠦	⠧	⠨	⠩	⠪	⠫	⠬
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
⠭	⠮	⠯	⠰	⠱	⠲	⠳	⠴	⠵	⠶	⠷	⠸	⠹
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

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## **Audio Visual**

What Do You Do When You See a Blind Person? American Foundation for the Blind.  
VHS format.



# RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

## State/National Resource Organizations

National Federation Of The Blind  
1800 Johnson Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21230  
410-659-9314  
\*Will loan braille from the Materials  
Department

American Council of the Blind  
1155 15th Street, NW, Suite 720  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-467-5081  
800-424-8666  
\*Will provide Braille Alphabet Cards for  
students

National Library Services for the Blind and  
Physically Handicapped  
Library of Congress  
1291 Taylor Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20542  
202-707-1500  
800-424-8567

American Foundation for the Blind  
11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300  
New York, NY 10001  
800-AFBLIND

NFB of Maryland  
Sharon Maneki, President  
9736 Basket Ring Road  
Columbia, MD 21045  
800-424-8666  
301-992-9608

## Local Organizations

Parent's Division of the National Federation of The Blind  
410-659-9314

Maryland School for the Blind  
Shirley Thompson  
3501 Taylor Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21236  
410-444-5000 x722

Maryland Society for Sight  
Kathleen Canten  
410-263-2020

Blind Industry & Services of Maryland  
Rosemary Lerdahl  
410-233-4567

Library for the Blind  
Virginia Rodes  
410-333-2668

For an expanded list of recommended films, literature, and resources on disabilities, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:  
National Easter Seal Society, FRIENDS WHO CARE Resource List, 70 East Lake Street, Chicago, IL 60601.